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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 004409

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [KISL](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: MOMBASA MUSLIMS SEE ORANGE

REF: A. REF A) NAIROBI 04080

[1](#)B. REF B) NAIROBI 01699

[1](#)C. REF C) NAIROBI 02639

[1](#)D. REF D) NAIROBI 02409

Classified By: Michael J. Fitzpatrick, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The vast majority of Muslims in Mombasa actively support the &Orange8 campaign for a "no" (or, "Orange") vote in November's referendum on the proposed new Kenyan constitution. While most Muslim leaders rally around contentious issues such as devolution of power and Khadis courts, the underlying sentiment is that the government in Nairobi continues to marginalize the Coast, and Muslims in particular, and therefore are not deserving of a "yes" ("Banana") vote for a constitution that serves to legitimize their hold on power. Mombasa youth groups are particularly active and well-versed in the debates and are pushing for a no-vote. One youth group leader also provided interesting insights on the terror threat in Kenya and the inability of the government to combat terrorism on the Coast. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff and visiting INR analyst met with Muslim religious and community leaders in Mombasa September 27 to 29 to discuss political and social issues affecting Mombasa Muslims. The Constitution dominated all conversations, with most using the debate as another forum to illustrate what they perceive as the central government's deliberate marginalization of the Coast.

Imams Advocating Orange

[1](#)3. (C) Muslim religious leaders in Mombasa are clearly in the Orange camp, even though most say they are not taking sides. Mombasa District Chairman for the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), Sheikh Juma Ngao, told Poloff he is not taking a stance publicly because he believes Imams should remain neutral. He then proceeded to give a laundry list of reasons why the Constitution is &20 percent poison8. He listed the main contentious issues as land redistribution, devolution of presidential powers, Coast resources being put back in the hands of Coast residents, and the Khadis courts. (NOTE: Khadis courts are Islamic courts that, with consent of the parties, handle civil matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. They have been legal in Kenya since before independence. Criminal cases are still handled by public courts. END NOTE.) (COMMENT: The Khadis courts is a prime example of the failure of civic education in certain parts of the country. While the draft new Constitution actually allows for Khadis courts -- with some potential new restrictions -- most Muslims on the Coast told Poloff they are outraged that the government wants to "outlaw" Khadis courts. This disconnect may stem from the initial debates preceding the final publication of the draft over whether or not to allow for Khadis courts, but apparently the accurate information has not reached many Coast Muslims. END COMMENT).

[1](#)4. (C) Sheikh Ngao said that although the constitutional debate is causing some minor rifts in the Muslim community, he has no doubt that the Orange camp will win, as there are very few Banana (Yes camp) supporters on the Coast. Ngao said he will advise the government to postpone the referendum until the contentious issues are worked out. (COMMENT: Ngao alone does not have the political sway to influence the GOK on any referendum issues. Even if he were to join with other Imams from the Coast, they alone do not hold enough clout to convince the GOK to slow down the process. END COMMENT).

[1](#)5. (C) Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) Secretary General, Sheikh Muhammad Dormuhammad, expressed

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many of the same concerns. He went further, saying he fears &something bad8 will happen during the referendum, but continues to pray for peace. He accused the government of buying votes and asserted that the elections will be rigged. He stated the Kikuyu (the President's up-country tribe) are the only ones who want this new constitution. Despite all his complaints, Dormuhammad did not give one concrete example of a contentious issue or make any educated references to the draft. He also asked why the U.S. Embassy is not taking a public stance on the referendum. (NOTE: Ironically, that same day Ambassador and 26 other diplomatic missions issued a

press statement calling for a violence-free and fair referendum (ref A). END NOTE). (COMMENT: Many moderate Muslims tell Poloff that Dormuhammad is mostly a noisemaker, and some say he and the CIPK do not have much influence. It is difficult to gauge just how extensive CIPK,s following is, but it was clear that Dormuhammad was more interested in criticizing the government and making noise publicly than actually reading the draft and putting forward constructive criticism. END COMMENT.)

Youth Groups Taking Initiative

16. (U) Mombasa youth group leaders were best versed on the draft constitution, and they were eager to discuss the issues at length with Poloff. The number one message that reverberated across the different groups was simple: &The Government does not do for us; so we do for ourselves.8 This is a message the youth, and even many older community leaders have put forward for sometime now, and the constitution is just one more example of this in their eyes. Several youth leaders were remarkably well-versed on the draft, displaying detailed knowledge of the different sections and how they differ from the current constitution. Devolution of power was the overarching sticking point. Surprisingly, despite having clearly read or at least learned about the points in the draft, youth leaders still complained about the Khadis courts as if the draft outlawed their use. Several articulate, intelligent group leaders said they will not waste their time voting, as they do not want to &vote for nothing.8

17. (C) All the youth group leaders had ambitious plans to help fill in the gaps left by what they view as deliberate marginalization by the government in Nairobi. Youth groups from Old Town, Likoni, Majengo and other parts of Mombasa all advocated for increased education opportunities. In terms of the constitution, they all plan to take an active role in civic education, especially since they believe the government will fail to reach out to most Coast residents. The number one complaint about education is that there is no university in Mombasa. (NOTE: Some investors from the Persian Gulf have drafted plans to build Mombasa Islamic University. END NOTE).

18. (U) The other main issue that dominates Mombasa youth leaders, current agenda is fighting illicit drug use. Old Town Social and Welfare Association (OSWA), a youth group based in Old Town Mombasa, is increasingly active in this fight. When Poloff first met the group in April, they were ambitious but did not yet have an office, a constitution or many members (ref B). The group has made substantial progress in six months. They now have an office in Old Town, a large membership base, and have actively participated in civic education campaigns and even cooperated with the police in a drug bust at the end of September. OSWA and the other youth groups Poloff met with have basically cast aside the government and are doing what they can to make their communities safer from drugs and crime and provide education opportunities for youth of all ages.

And On Terrorism(

19. (C) As is usually the case when speaking to USG officials, Muslim leaders took the opportunity to address terrorism issues as well. Sheikh Dormuhammad spoke of the terror suspects who were released in June (Refs C and D), saying no evidence was presented linking them with the 2003 twin attacks in Mombasa and nearby Kikambala. He claimed no Kenyan Muslims would kill innocents and accused Arabs of being bad Muslims. Sheikh Ngao,s only comments were to advise the U.S. to stop preaching to Iran about nuclear weapons while allowing India, Pakistan and North Korea to continue building their arsenal.

110. (C) In a sidebar conversation, one OSWA leader, Rustam, spoke to INR analyst about the terrorist threat in Mombasa. While he regarded the al-Qaida operatives themselves as foreign "Arabs," Rustam indicated that youth in Mombasa are very vulnerable to recruitment by al-Qaida and that he believed recruitment is currently underway. He linked recruitment to poverty and the overall marginalization of Mombasa youth. He is convinced that at least two al-Qaida operatives are still in the coastal area, although he is not exactly sure where, claiming that they (NFI) recently lost track of them. He claims he was near the Paradise Hotel during the Kikambala attack and that he works with the Anti-Terrorist Police Unit (ATPU) in Mombasa (he showed the business card of his contact in ATPU). He was very critical of CT efforts by the government, who he accused of sending officers with little understanding of the coast who are easily identified by locals, cannot recruit sources, resent having to work in the coastal area and do not actually want

to be active and involved in such dangerous work. ATPU needs to recruit people from the coast to work as officers in order to really penetrate the extremists. He warned that the threat on the coast was very real and believed another attack would take place there.

BIO NOTES

11. (C) Sheikh Juma Ngao: Ngao is the Mombasa Chairman for Supkem. He is in his early 30s. He is articulate, intelligent and an excellent orator. He is well versed in Islam and international politics. However, he is quite arrogant and feels he holds a more influential position than most believe he does. He clearly has political ambitions and as such, seeks opportunities to advise the government on Coast and Muslim issues. He is very open to speaking with American officials and is both friendly and chatty.

12. (C) Sheikh Muhammad Dormuhammad (aka Sheikh Dor): Dormuhammad is the Secretary General of CIPK. Although Dormuhammad would like to believe his group is the most influential in the Muslim community, many moderate Muslims downplay his following. He claims to speak for all Coast Muslims. He is a good public speaker, but he is not as well versed on actual issues of political significance as some of his colleagues. He does not mince words and will openly tell American officials why Muslims do not like the American government. Many locals do not consider him a true Imam, however, because he does not read Arabic well.
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